

From: **Pat Brown**
Subject: Minuteman vocational High School Building Proposal -- Concerns with both the project and the district-wide election
Date: October 26, 2015 at 4:01 PM
To: constituent.services@state.ma.us
Bcc: Brown Pat

Dear Sir or Madam:

Pat (for "Patricia") Brown here, from the Sudbury Board of Selectmen. I read with interest Lieutenant-Governor Polito's comments at the Minuteman Vocational Technical High School Committee Dinner on October 14, and want to share with you our local perspective on the Minuteman Building Project and the Minuteman Regional District in general.

Sudbury is committed to offering its students the opportunity for a high-quality vocational education. We recognize that an effective regional vocational high school is theoretically a cost-effective way of expanding the programs available to a number of towns each contributing a relatively small number of students.

However, **the proposed 628 student school vastly exceeds the requirements of the sixteen district towns** (currently enrolling fewer than 400 in-district high school students). The education plan requiring construction of a school for 600 or more students demands the enrollment of over 200 out-of-district students. The costs of educating these out-of-district students cannot be considered marginal costs; currently, over 40% of students come from out-of-district. However, the tuition reimbursement levels capped by the Commonwealth Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will decrease from \$18,467 in FY2015 to \$17,556 in FY2016 (i), even as per-student expenditures greatly exceed that number (\$26,245 annual expenditure per pupil for FY2013 as reported by DESE (ii).)

The difference between the cost of educating these out-of-district students and the reimbursement from the sending districts constitutes a large and growing unfunded mandate upon the municipalities in the Minuteman District. The cost of building a 628 student school to the member towns is not only the capital cost to the member communities for building a facility at least 40% larger than it needs to be, but also the operating cost of subsidizing the expenses for out-of-district students whose tuitions do not cover the cost of their educations.

This situation has been developing for decades, and has reached a crisis when the current building project was approved by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) in 2009 with a 40% reimbursement rate. The design for a 628 student school was finally approved by MSBA in August of 2015, but the 40% reimbursement rate is good only until June 30, 2016. **The Minuteman District proposes a district-wide vote to gain an approval for this project not supported by the member towns** and avoid the scrutiny of local Finance Committees and Boards of Selectmen.

Various member towns (letters attached) have informed the Minuteman District of their opposition to the District's plans, both the size of the school and the proposed district-wide vote. Sudbury is not alone in our concerns. Another common theme is the thwarted desire to leave the Minuteman Regional District as a means of avoiding the requirement to substantially subsidize out-of-district students. **It is financially very advantageous to be a non-member rather than a member town with students at Minuteman**, and a number of towns would like to withdraw. I have not attached letters from Belmont and Arlington—these are longer communications with more extensive detail—I can forward them on request.

We ask for the Baker-Polito Administration's support in achieving equity: in which the cost of educating out-of-district vocational students is not paid by imposing an unfunded mandate upon towns in the Minuteman District.

I would be happy to discuss this matter further. I've omitted much detail in an attempt to respect your time. Thank you for your attention.

Pat Brown
Sudbury Board of Selectmen

(i) <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/> (FY16 Chapter 70 Aid link)
(ii) http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/ppx.aspx



Wayland and MMVTS
Next Steps.pdf